

Thank you all for taking time out of your busy day to help celebrate the first Farm to School week here in Minnesota.

Thank you JoAnne, for your great leadership in making St. Paul one of the premiere models in the country for farm to school programs and for your efforts to promote it across Minnesota.

Thank you Tamara, and the two Jamies for having me here at the Community Design Center and telling me about all the amazing work you are doing in the community. It is so important to be helping our students live healthier lives, exposing them to the joys of the outdoors and teaching them that gardening and cooking can be fun.

To the students, Kou and Xia, I congratulate you for doing St. Paul proud with your recipes and your success at the Cooking Up Change contest. I'm sure St. Paul students are going to enjoy your Minnesota slaw recipe.

We know that childhood obesity is a serious problem facing our youth. It not only puts youth more at risk for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, but it's costing Minnesota taxpayers over \$1 billion in health care costs to treat. We also see small and mid size family farmers, including many Hmong farmers, struggling to access local markets for their vegetables and fruits.

So I introduced the National Farm to School Act as a win-win solution for our children, our farmers and our communities. Farm to school is a way to link local farmers to healthier school meals for our children. Instead of eating tater tots and sloppy joes, thanks to farm to school programs, St. Paul's students are getting to eat Minnesota apples, sweet corn and squash.

My bill allows for a competitive matching grant program of up to \$100,000 to support communities wanting to do what we've done here in St. Paul. The Child Nutrition Act that we are waiting to vote on in Congress contains most of the provisions in my bill, along with many other improvements to make sure our children are getting adequate nutrition. I will be fighting in Washington to make sure it gets done. I know the First Lady has also made this her priority.

As a parent, I taught my children the importance and fun of eating enough fresh vegetables and fruit. I'm happy to see the work you are doing here at the Community Design Center to show our children how we need to make healthy eating a priority. And it's gratifying to hear from

students why it's important to have access to local and healthy food.

It is my honor to help kick off the first Minnesota Farm to School week. I want to thank the Minnesota School Nutrition Association and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy whose partnership has helped to catalyze Minnesota's Farm to School movement. Healthy, nutritious food is essential to the well-being of our children. Locally produced food served in our schools is a positive step towards keeping children healthy and ready to learn. At the same time these new opportunities for local farmers helps keep more of our local food dollar here in Minnesota.

All of our students deserve access to healthy, nutritious food. I applaud the incredible work of the Community Design Center in getting students inspired and excited about growing their own food and knowing where it comes from. I am confident that once we pass the Child Nutrition Act, we are going to be able to replicate across the country what we are doing here in Minnesota in building healthier school lunches and inspiring more children to know their vegetables and fruits.

Thank you all for coming today.